

RHODE ISLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
MEETING OF THE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SESSION

May 1, 2008

The Rhode Island Science & Technology Advisory Council (“STAC”) met on Thursday, May 1, 2008 in Public Session at the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Providence, Rhode Island pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Dr. Clyde Briant (Co-Chair), Ms. Kimball Hall, Dr. David Hibbitt, Mr. Saul Kaplan, Dr. Arthur Klein, Dr. Richard Nadolink, Dr. Thomas Rockett, Dr. Jeffrey Seemann (Co-Chair), Mr. Donald Stanford

Members absent were Dr. Peter Alfonso, Dr. Margaret Leinen and Mr. Thomas Ryan.

Also present were Governor Carcieri, and members of the Governor’s, Lt. Governor Roberts and RIEDC’s staff. Drs. Briant and Seemann presided over the meeting.

Welcome

Dr. Briant called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. stating that the agenda for this meeting would focus on an update on STAC’s initiatives to expand the competitiveness and connectivity of Rhode Island’s statewide research community, including announcements of a new phase of Research Alliance activities and a presentation by Richard Bendis, a national leader in the field of leveraging technology-based economic development initiatives to accelerate economic growth.

Dr. Seemann then introduced Governor Carcieri who urged the Council to continue its work of diversifying and strengthening our economy by building a platform for collaboration in areas of research excellence. These efforts to build an innovation economy, he stressed, are increasingly urgent in times of financial challenges.

Approval of Minutes

Citing no changes, upon a motion duly made by Dr. Klein and seconded by Mr. Kaplan the minutes of the January 25, 2008 STAC meeting were accepted.

Announcement of Rhode Island Research Alliance Expansion

Dr. Briant then announced that Brown University and the University of Rhode Island will join together to each contribute \$25,000 for support of the next phase of Research Alliance activity. These catalytic investments from Brown and URI will facilitate the development of an engagement plan that assesses the best opportunities for collaboration among the state's major research organizations and deepens support for the Alliance among participating institutions.

This funding will also help the Alliance expand its activities to begin assisting with the preparation of collaborative proposals to major funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and support the development and marketing of joint /shared laboratory facilities.

Dr. Seemann added that with this expansion, the Alliance will also take a more active role in supporting Rhode Island's EPSCoR/IDEA programs. STAC currently provides executive leadership for the program and moving forward the Alliance will create the basis for more centralized EPSCoR/IDEA functions within the state.

The Research Alliance will remain focused on ongoing activities, including educational events such as the inaugural Collaborative Research Symposium on June 3, 2008 and funding programs such as the Collaborative Grant Awards.

Dr. Klein applauded the Research Alliance and noted the critical role an Alliance would play in identifying statewide opportunities. He added Rhode Island's unique demography provides one of the best clinical databases for leveraging collaborative efforts in areas such as biomarking.

State EPSCoR Governance Committee Report

Dr. Seemann introduced the next order of business which pertained to the RI State EPSCoR Governance Committee. Established in February 2004, RI EPSCoR works to build partnerships between state government, institutions of higher education and industry to effect lasting improvements in statewide research infrastructure and national R&D competitiveness.

In this capacity, the EPSCoR office is called upon by the Department of Defense to annually solicit its colleges and universities, through a competitive RFP process, for emerging research projects in areas of importance to national defense. Dr. Seemann announced that a team led by Dr. Jimmy Xu at Brown University was one of 33 researchers selected nationally for funding. Dr. Xu's proposal addresses the development of a new optoelectronic semiconductor system and will lead to a powerful platform for new infrared sensing and potentially uncooled sensing applications for use in work on night vision sensors. The Department of Defense (DoD) EPSCoR program is an important way of increasing the involvement of Rhode Island faculty in research projects of critical importance to the DoD and we wish Dr. Xu and his team success.

Rhode Island has reached the midway point of its 3-year \$6.75 million Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) and intends to apply for an RII renewal grant later this year which is expected to be for \$15 million over 5 years. The application will most likely build on areas funded by the current grant and expand into areas suggested by the AAAS review team such as bioinformatics or bioengineering.

URI Commission

Hon. Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Chair of the URI Commission for Research and Innovation, presented a progress report on the Commission which is charged with proposing specific actions to strengthen the position of the University of Rhode Island as a nationally competitive public research university and a key institution in Rhode Island's effort to strengthen its innovation economy. Justice Flanders was joined by Christine Heenan of Clarendon Group, which is conducting research and analysis for the Commission.

At the January STAC meeting, Clarendon Group reported on key indicators of and necessary preconditions for research excellence. Since January, the Group's work focused on interviewing URI stakeholders and assessing what building blocks are in place and where URI is today. From this work, Clarendon stated it has identified six broad recommendation themes: 1) Prioritizing research and economic development with URI leadership and culture; 2) Investing in research capacity at URI; 3) Developing a research-friendly university operational and financing model; 4) Encouraging and rewarding collaboration; 5) Building on established and emerging excellence; and 6) Building a more science and technology oriented workforce.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for June 16th. At this meeting, Clarendon will present specific recommendations along these topic areas for Commissioners to discuss. The project is on schedule to deliver a final report by the fall.

The Governor encouraged the Commission to continue to share its findings with key constituents and remarked that implementation will be a key component of the overall effort. Justice Flanders replied that the Commission is in full agreement; this is an investment in the future and they will work to develop a set of actionable recommendations.

National Perspective on Research and Innovation

Dr. Briant welcomed Richard Bendis who has spent his career supporting the development and commercialization of new technologies. As a leader in developing private/public sector partnerships such as Kansas Technology Enterprise Corporation and Innovation Philadelphia, Mr. Bendis has worked with technology companies through each phase of the technology life cycle. He noted that a common attribute of successful companies and programs is the ability to be responsive to change. Strong innovation economies utilize knowledge workers to transform knowledge into new products, processes and services demanded by the market. In this environment, the critical role of the public sector is to act as a catalyst by charting a long term vision, making strategic

investments to encourage innovation and providing an educational foundation that produces knowledge workers for newly created jobs. Success, he cautioned, also requires an engaged private sector and an academic enterprise that not only creates, but also transfers knowledge. Mr. Bendis noted that he finds the partnership between Brown and URI to be very interesting and a strong signal of the strong foundation RI has set for its R&D efforts.

Research Alliance Web Portal Demonstration

Dr. Briant then introduced Melissa Withers of the RIEDC who conducted a brief demonstration of the new Research Alliance Web Portal. To effectively support research activities, it is essential to support the researchers by providing tools that make it as easy as possible to pursue collaborative research projects and connections with colleagues. The new web portal provides information on STAC and EPSCoR activities and contains the state's first comprehensive cataloging of shared equipment and facilities. This new portfolio is designed to be a "one stop" view of activity happening across the state's research community.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

There being no further business in Public Session, upon a motion duly made by Dr. Klein and seconded by Dr. Rockett, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Christine M.B. Smith
Secretary